# THE LIGHT UPON THE Candlestick.

SERVING FOR

## OBSERVATION

Of the principal things in the Book called,

*The Mysteries of the Kingdom of God, &c*

Against several Professors,

*Treated of, and written by* Will. Ames.

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1 John 1. 5. *This is the Message which we have heard from him, and we declare unto you, That God is* LIGHT, *and in him is no darkness at all,*

Eph. 5. 13. *For whatsoever maketh manifest, is* LIGHT.

Printed in *Low-Dutch* for the Author, 1662. and translated into *English* by *B. F.*

*LONDON*, Printed for *Robert Wilson*, 1663.

# *The Light upon the Candlestick.*

THings are not for words, but words for things: if therefore we understand things aright & as they ought, by words, it must be by such as are fit to imprint the things themselves in those to whom they should occur, and then it were enough (to make known our thoughts to others as we conceive them) only to make use of such *Words*.

But forasmuch as we find the matter in this case far otherwise, and that two men speaking or writing the same words, may nevertheless have different, yea sometimes contrary thoughts, the disability of performing this fitly by words or discourse, is clearly inferred. Nor may we at all wonder at it, seeing we know to what a perpetual change Languages are subject, even such that the very words may be changed from their pristine signification. And the imperfection is so great, that whosoever should have invented them, such as now they are in use, we should certainly believe that he had little or no knowledge of those things that are thereby intended to be signified. So that if we would better express things unto another by words and speeches, we had need find new words, and consequently a whole new Language: But that would be a toyle and labour indeed.

*If words are too gross to express the refined thoughts of mortal men, how much less then can they be in truth said to be the* ineffable *Word of the eternal God?*

In the mean while we see what a Sea of Confusion flows from hence upon all mankind: For although there should be none who sometimes through ignorance, and sometimes by subtilty or wickedness might rest or pervert words contrary to the mind

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of the ſpeaker or writer, in ſuch manner as themſelves that ſo do ſhould think beſt for their own ends, from whence conſequently all this deceit, ſlandering, contention, and the like proceeds: yet ſo it is, that how upright or prudent ſoever a man goes to work in this matter, he nevertheleſs finds himſelf liable to miſlead, or to be miſled.

But although the caſe be thus with words and diſcourſes at preſent in uſe, yet for all that, they are the moſt ready, and ſo far as I know, the fitteſt means to make known all our thoughts unto others by: And for this reaſon therefore, though ſo much confuſion and deceit happens to ariſe from hence, that no man that hath but any experience, can be ignorant thereof: yet may we not (therefore) be too much afraid of them neither, as many yet do manifeſt themſelves to be, who becauſe they have ſom experience hereof, are apt to believe we are about to deceive them, eſpecially if they be but forewarned thereof.

This, as in many things, ſo it hath chiefly taken place in that which is commonly eſteemed for Religion: In which 'tis ſo with moſt men, that they will ſcarce give audience to, much leſs take into conſideration any thing held forth unto them by any whom they judge not to be of their own opinion, as they imagine, to avoid being thereby deluded.

*Fear and Partiality are a ſnare to moſt men.*

Yet if they were thus towards their own Party, we might think it was an act of prudence, and that they would ſee with their own eyes: But no, in no wiſe, this is too hard a task: whatſoever cometh on that ſide, is received with ſuch partiality for good and current Coyne, as if there were no danger nor poſſibility of erring: whereas nevertheleſs it is all alike with the one as with the other opinion. It all depends but upon a poſſibility of being neareſt to the Truth: and for the upholding every one his own opinion, and defending it againſt others, there's ſo much ado, ſo much pains taken, ſo much Scholaſtick Learning, ſtudy and diſputing, that one would rather believe that there were no true Religion at all, then that this ſhould needs be it.

Seeing then 'tis thus at preſent, can we much blame the common people, that they deſpair of ever being able to trim up this hurt, and are glad when they can but find any that are greedy of

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the Work, upon whom they may cast the whole burthen? Surely no: for he that sees but a little clearly, sees, that there's always contention behind, and no end till a man grows weary of it: Nor is the Conquest just his that hath Truth, but that can best handle his Tongue. A miserable thing if it were thus to be sought and found! But it is not so with the true Religion.

Go to then, O man, who ever thou art, we wil not draw thee off from one heap of men, to carry thee over unto another, 'tis somewhat else we invite thee too. Lend us but a little audience: Surely thou knowest thus much, That as it is an extremity to receive all things without distinction, that present themselves to us, so 'tis no less to reject all things without judgement. We invite thee to something which may be means to attain to thy own salvation and well-being: Be as distrustful, or rather prudent or foresighted as thou wilt, thou canst not in reason refuse us thy ear in this thing: All the damage thou canst possibly have by doing that which we exhort thee to, is only to have taken a little pains in vain, if that which is promised should not ensue: Whereas on the contrary, should it follow, thou mightest come to the enjoyment of a matter of so great a worth, that would not be exchanged for all that's esteemed great in the earth. Moreover, 'tis not far to seek, but at hand, 'tis *nigh* thee, yea and in thy self. And there thou mayest experience the trial of that which we declare, which is the most certain and sure that can be desired.

*'Tis little worth that is not worth the trial: The loss is little, the gain may be invaluable.*

We direct thee then to within thy self, that is, that thou oughtest to turn into, to mind and have regard unto that which is within thee, to wit, The Light of Truth, the true Light which enlightneth every man that cometh into the world. Here 'tis that thou must be, and not without thee. Here thou shalt find a Principle certain and infallible, and whereby encreasing and going on therein, thou mayest at length arrive un to a happy condition: Of this thou mayest highly adventure the tryal. But if thou durst not do so much, 'tis hard to help thee. And if thou happenest to be one of

*'Tis hard helping him that durst not try.*

those

*Many desire to know all things, but few to experience any thing.*

those that wouldst know all things, before thou dost begin, yea, even those things which are experienced in a condition to which thou art so much a stranger, that there's nothing in thee hath so much agreement therewith, as to comprehend it according to truth: Know this, Thou dost (therein) just as those that would learn to Read, without knowing the Letters.

To desire to know all things that we are capable of, is good and laudable: But to go further, is folly. There wil be alwayes something else to ask, and our knowledge will ever be too short. He that will not adventure till he be fully satisfied, shall never begin, much less finish it to his own salvation.

But we judge it needful (as much as in us lyes) to open unto you that unto which we do exhort you, that people may understand what it properly is.

We say then, That we exhort every one to turn into the Light that's in him, (We give it rather the appellation of Light, than any thing else, otherwise it's all one to us whether ye call it, Christ, the Spirit, the Word, &c. seeing these all denote but one and the same thing:) Yet the word Light being in its natural signification so, what else then that which we intend thereby, we shall therefore in brief endeavour clearly to express what we intend under this denomination.

*'Tis not the Name, but the Nature, Virtue and Substance we stand for.*

*The* LIGHT *as to man, what it is, defined.*

The Light (then we say) is a clear and distinct knowledge of truth in the understanding of every man, by which he is so convinced of the Being and Quality of things, that he cannot possibly doubt thereof.

From this definition which is here given of the Light, 'tis clear, that it must needs comprehend in it the principal effect of shewing us, and giving us the knowledge of what's Truth and Falshood, what's good and evil: which verily is a matter of so great concernment, that without it men must needs swerve up and down in continual darkness, opinion and sin, neither knowing truth at all, nor doing any good, but gropingly, by hap-hazard, without any certainty.

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This Light [illegible] the Truth, &c. is that which makes manifest and reproves of sin in man, shewing him how he is strayed from God, accuseth him of the evil which he doth and hath committed; yea, this is it which judgeth and condemneth him. Again,

This is the preaching to every Creature under Heaven, though they have never read or heard of the Scripture. This is it which leads man into truth, into the way to God, which excuseth him in well-doing, giving him peace in his Conscience, yea, brings him to union with God, wherein all happiness and salvation doth consist.

*The nature and operation of the Light is to make manifest, and to discover.*

Moreover, seeing it is properly the nature of this Light infallibly to discover sin and evil, to reprove and convince thereof; it can never possibly consent thereunto. And although it be true indeed, That the operations of the Light are not in all men alike powerful, in whom it is nevertheless: yea, (though) in some men (it) seems to have no operation at all: Yet this is occasioned only by those impediments that do hinder it: For as the natural Light by the interposition of other bodies or covers, may be hindered from having its operation there where else it would, were those things which impede, removed, the Light (it self) still abiding in its self unchanged: Even so it is also with this Light whereof we speak. The lets in this are manifold. All whatsoever we meet with in this world, seems to proclaim war in this case. What is there that hath not a powerful operation upon one or other of the Sences of man, through which passing over into the soul, the memory is so filled, that nothing else can enter. The eyes and ears stand so perpetually open to all things, that they never want an object to bring to mind the experience of that which pleased the body so well, And this stirs up the desire to enjoy it, yet all without satisfaction: The objects they are multifarious, the

*The Sun, though oft darkned as to us, yet is always the same in it self. So the true Light.*

*No wonder the Light is no more known, while the darkness is so much loved.*

Obs. And thus this Light is therefore the first Principle of Religion.

Without this Light there is no power or ability at all in man to do any good.

This must first raise him and quicken him out of the death of sin. 'Tis folly to expect any thing, where nothing is, there's no effect without a cause: There must be something then which must cause a man to act, if he does any thing.

*Where there is nothing to work, there nothing can be wrought.*

And this cause must have in it whatsoever the effect produced hath in it: As for example *, if the effects of Light be produced, Light must do it, and nothing else.

* *Where any see, there must needs be* LIGHT.

And therefore, is it not a silly thing that all men would have people do this or that as good, and leave this or that as evil, because they tell them so, without any more ado, or at best assigning only the accustomary motives wherefore, & think they have reason too, just as if this were enough? Who can see such effects as are hereby required, included in this Cause? Not I, for my part.

Experience also teacheth us the same; else how could it all pass away in a train and custom, without any fruit? These are therefore not the right means: But such we must endeavour to furnish people with, Means from whence Power may issue forth to do that which they are exhorted to. Such is the nature of man, that he is forced to chuse that which he judgeth to be best, before the worst, and is always willing to change for the best.

*'Tis folly to expect effects from unsuitable Means.*

Now if it so happens (as for the most part it doth) that a man chuseth the worst before the best, 'tis for want of knowledge, and contrary to his aim, and so he erreth, not being led by the true Light.

*No man wittingly chuseth his own harm, but being blinded.*

the enjoyment can be but single and transient, and the causes incessant.

Now where this operateth in us after this manner by education and example in manners and customs which are regulated by Opinion, and not by the true Light, that men live altogether therein, is it any wonder that here (in these men) there is so little, or no operation of the Light? Not at all.

We are so involved into the desire of that which is high in the World, so overwhelmed in pleasures, that its almost impossible for the Light to cause one desire after Good to spring or bubble up.

Where then these so contrary operations to the Light are, there it can never break through.

According to the nature and kind of every thing, is the operation thereof: Where they are opposite, the one must give way unto the other, and that which is most powerful prevails: from whence also the effects thereof becom most visible. The LIGHT notwithstanding, abides always the same, & therefore although man by sin, through his love and union to corruptible things, comes to perish, be damned, and miss of his everlasting happiness, the Light nevertheless which is in every man that comes into the World, abides for ever unchangeable.

*No knowledge of God without this Light.*

The Light is also the first Principle of Religion. For, seeing there can be no true Religion without the knowledge of God, and no knowledge of God without this Light, Religion must necessarily have this Light for its first Principle.

*The Light being found, and God thereby known, a sure foundation is discovered.*

God being then known by this *Light* according to the measure of knowledg which the finite & circumscribed Creature can have of the Infinite and Uncircumscriptible Creator, man hath obtained a firm Foundation, upon which he may build all firm and lasting things: A Principle whereby he may without ever erring, gude the whole course of his life, how he is to carry himself towards God, his Neighbor, and himself, and all things else, whereby he may happily attain unto his chiefest salvation, which consisteth only in Union with God.

Here then it should be begun, 'tis easie leading of a man to that which of himself he is desirous of. If those now who make it their Work to teach others, were but led themselves by the true Light, knowing better things then those towhich the multitude are link't so fast with love, they would be able to hold them forth clearly to others: And so making it their continual work, 'twere impossible their labour should be fruitless. for people knowing better, would better do. Who remembers not the play of our youth, how much we were in love therewith, and yet how ridiculous is it now unto us but to think upon it? And why? Becauſe we now know that which we judge better. *Herehence*, not by force, but very lightly, and of it ſelf, they came from time to time to be worn out, and paſs away, that there's now no deſire nor motion moving thereunto. How may we think then it would be, if the Spirit came but once to apprehend thoſe things aright which infinitely tranſcend all bodily things in worth? which are durable and uncorruptible. So far as theſe toyes then ſhould come to be eſteemed more glorious then all bodily things, ſo much the more powerful would be the annihilation of thoſe things in which all men, even to old age, yea, death it ſelf, do take ſo much delight; and then we might hope and expect that thoſe things which are (indeed) alone worthy to be known, would gain entrance, & being brought forth in the Light, would be alſo owned and received by every one, according to the meaſure in which they ſhould ſtand in the ſame Light.

*Therefore to undeceive the Judgement is the firſt ſtep.*

*The Judgement being unexpended, the will and affections muſt follow.*

*If you know the truth, the truth ſhall make you free, ſaith Chriſt.*

Hence, from within, the amendment and converſion is to be waited for, from within it muſt begin, if with foundation, the outward then will follow of it ſelf. The weakeſt muſt give way to the ſtrongeſt *, all depends but upon the knowledge of ſomething better,

*No man will part with what he judges beſt, till he ſees ſomething better, and then he need not be forced*

better, to make a true and lasting change. Therefore to hold this forth to men, is the best thing we can give them.

**This Light is the inward ear, by which alone, and by no other, the voice of God, that is the Truth, can be heard.**

By this alone must the sence and mind of him that would signifie any thing by words or any outward sign, be comprehended and understood. So that if the Truth of God be presented to a man who stands not in the Light of Truth, 'tis impossible he should understand it, although he hears and comprehends the words after his manner, yet he is still fenced off from the true sence and meaning thereof.

Hence, therefore, it is, that amongst so many hearers there are so few that have ears to hear.

He that hears Truth aright, that is, understands it wel, must not stand out of, but in the Truth it self.

Therefore neither is it any wonder that all men do not understand and conceive those things that are brought forth by the Light. Those only that stand in it, are alone (and no other) capable thereof.

The case being thus, we see of how great concernment it is continually to exhort and excite men to turn in to the Light that is in them, that so they may go on to such a condition and measure therein, as to be fit to understand aright the Word, that is, the Truth of God, because out of this there can be nothing understood and concluded from the words and writings given forth from the Light, but meer opinion, &consequently errors. This Light Christ, &c. is the truth, word of God, as hath been already said, and every way appears by what we have hitherto laid down: For this is a living Word, and transmitteth man from death to life, is powerful, and enableth a man to bear witness of it self every where.

*This is the one and first thing necessary.*

This is also the true Rule according unto which all our actions are to be squared.

This hath the preheminence before any Writing, Scripture, Doctrine, or any thing else that we meet with from without. We are born in to the world, and brought up as every body knows. From the very first we hear differences, every one pre-

tends that he knows the matter, and hath truth: One holds forth this, another that to us: If now the Light *which is in every man that comes into the world*, shall not be Judge, whither shall we rowle? To believe all, is impossible; to reject all, no less: Who shall be Judg here? Who else can be but the Light within us? For whatsoever comes from without, is the thing to be judged of: Who then fitter? seeing this is infallible.

*There is but one thing which is uncorruptible, which cannot be corrupted, which must be the Judge of all things that offer themselves to our trial, which are liable to be corrupted, as are all things without us.*

*Therefore this one Judg is undeniably within man.*

Again, Is not this (the Light) that by which we must see and know God, and so consequently that by which we must judge all things Divine? Certainly 'tis: then it follows also, That we can judge of no Doctrine, of no Book that is Divine, but by this Light: and judging it thereby to be Divine, it cannot but be truly so. As for example, If we experience that the Book called the BIBLE, in regard of the Divine Doctrine therein compriſed, hath such an harmony with that in which God is known, that he must needs have been the Author of it, there cannot rationally any more powerful demonstration be demanded. With them that are thus, the Scripture may become living and powerful, and not a dead letter, as it must needs be to those men who have no feeling of this thing. And from hence then it's apparent, seeing this Light must stand before all things whatsoever that we meet with from without, that then man must first of all be directed to this, for without it what profit is there (I pray) to be reaped any where by any external sign but by it. Lay the Book of the Scripture freely before any man, let him also have all the fitness (the Universities can give him) to look into it in its proper Language in which it may have been first written, what will all be without the Light? Nothing.

*No man farther knows the Scriptures, then he is what the Scripture speaks*

*No other sure Foundation can be laid.*

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The letters, the words are not the Scriptures, but the mind alone is the Scripture, and this meaning can never be truly and justly hit, but by those alone that stand in the same Light, out of which the Scriptures proceeded.

These are they then to whom the Scripture is a Co-witness, and as a seal of their being Sons of God: while by experience they find themselves, every one according to his measure, in the same condition in which the Saints formerly were, who spake & writ all those things comprehended in the Book of the Scripture; these then have the true understanding and meaning of the Scriptures, not those that imagine unto themselves a meaning by opinion and guess, thorough a thousand imaginations, without the least assurance of not erring: which becomes the very ground of all jangling and contention.

In fine, and lastly, This Light in every man is the means to come to the knowledge of God. And seeing all external signes must needs presuppose this knowledge: therefore its self must needs be immediate, without any external sign: that signs must presuppose such a knowledge, is undeniable, for these signs must either be words or effects, works or miracles.

*Where the knowledg of God is not, there all external things are of no value. Therefore this knowledge must needs first be immediate, and altogether independent to all externals,*

If Words, we see at first an impossibility in in the thing it self: for Words are created and finite, and God who should make known himself by them, uncreated and infinite: and therefore here is so infinite a difference, that there is no manner of agreement, nor any thing in the world by which they might be capable to do it. But again, if you flye to the meaning of the words, as being fit for such a thing, then that which we say will more manifestly appear: As put case for example sake, that GOD about to make known himself by words, should say, I AM GOD, and that this should be the sign by which he would make himself known, we see clearly, that it would be impossible for a man at first to know God by this: For if he should comprehend any

*Words too weak to give the knowledge of God.*

thing

thing out of the sence of the words, he must needs formerly have had the signification of the word GOD, and what he is to understand by it: In like manner if God maketh his will known to man, the Knowledge of God (which hath its original from the true Light) must precede and convince him, that that (Manifestation) can be from none but God alone, whereupon he's then sufficiently assured.

If by Effects, (or outward miraculous Works) 'tis the same thing; for these are no less created, no less terminated: And though we might observe somthing in the nature of a thing, which might be too difficult for the power of any creature, which we know to effect: Yet this at the utmost would be but a demonstration taken from our impotency, and not from the nature and all the operations of it; and this kind of demonstration cannot be certain and stable, till we were able clearly and distinctly to see that there was not a concurrency of many causes to produce such an effect, but that it must needs have been caused by an infinite and unlimited cause, whom we call God: But who knoweth this? Or who can declare it?

*Many things may seem Divine Miracles, which are produced by a hidden concurrence of many natural causes: Therefore without the knowledge of God precedes, no man can discern in this case. From whence undeniably is concluded, That these can neither be any sure foundation, or certain, nay nor possible means to bring any to the knowledge of* God.

Add to this, That the knowledge of God in all things must first be, before the knowledge of any creature or particular thing, so no particular thing without this, can be well known; and so consequently altogether uncapable to come to know God by, or certainly to make known himself to man by.

Go to then, Without thy self, O man, thou hast no means to look for, by which thou maist know God. Thou must abide within thy self, to the Light that's in thee thou must turn thee, there thou wilt find it, and no where else.

GOD is, considered in Himself, nearest unto thee and every man. He that goes forth of himself to any Creature, thereby

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to know God, departs from God, and so much the further, as he comes more to mistake himself by it. This thou must then shun, and the contrary mind, viz. Mind the Light thats in thee, by it to work, unmovably and faithfully to persevere.

*God considered in himself, is nearest unto every man then himself, because he penetrates the most inward and intimate parts of man, and is the life of the inmost spirits, as the spirit is of the soul, & the soul of the body: Therefore is he worthy to be turned to, minded, sought, waited upon, and feared. Let all blind Leaders that say 'tis not God that appeareth in the hearts of the wicked, hear this; and all fools that say,* In their heart there is no God.

THE END